

Message Text

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ACTION EA-14

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SUBJ: PRESS REACTION

FIVE HONG KONG NEWSPAPERS COMMENTED TODAY ON THE PRESIDENT'S
DECISION TO TURN OVER THE TAPES TO THE FEDERAL COURT. EXCERPTS
FOLLOW:

1. THE INDEPENDENT MING PAO, TRACING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE
WATERGATE INVESTIGATIONS AND EMPHASIZING THE ANGER PROVOKED
BY THE DISMISSAL OF COX, REMARKED: "ON THIS QUESTION NIXON
HAS FINALLY GIVEN IN AND AGREED TO SURRENDER THE TAPES. THE
CONTENTS OF THE TAPES PROBABLY DON'T POSE ANY GREAT PROBLEM, BUT
THIS AFFAIR IS JUST BEGINNING AND OTHER DISPUTES MAY ARISE.
JUDGING FROM THE COX AFFAIR, WHAT WARRIES THE WHITE HOUSE SEEMS
TO BE NOT THE WATERGATE TAPES, BUT RATHER TAPES RELATED TO OTHER
CASES. THESE OTHER CASES INCLUDE THE ACCEPTANCE OF BRIBE BY THE
FORMER TREASURY SECRETARY, (SIC) THE GIFT OF US\$100,000 FROM
MULTI-MILLIONAIRE HOWARD HUGHES, THE ANTI-TRUST SUIT AGAINST ITT,
WHETHER THE WHITE HOUSE HELPED NIXON'S CLOSE FRIENDS BY NOT ALLOWING
A COMPETITIVE BANK TO BE ESTABLISHED, ETC."

2. THE INDEPENDENT SING PAO DAILY COMMENTED: "NIXON'S DECISION
WAS APPARENTLY PROMPTED BY THE ANGER EXPRESSED BY VARIOUS QUARTERS
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OVER COX'S DISMISSAL. MOREOVER, MEMBERS OF THE CONGRESS WERE

INITIATING IMPEACHMENT PROCEEDINGS. WHILE IT IS STILL UNKNOWN WHETHER IMPEACHMENT WILL GO THROUGH, ONCE IT DOES HE WILL HAVE TO GO. HIS CHANGE OF MIND WILL OF COURSE EASE THE CRISIS SOMEWHAT, BUT CANNOT REMOVE IT ALTOGETHER. SOME DEMOCRATIC SENATORS HAVE ALREADY INDICATED THEIR DETERMINATION TO CHASE HIM OUT."

3. THE MODERATELY RIGHTIST SING TAO JIH PAO OBSERVED: "NIXON IS INDEED A SHREWD POLITICIAN, ONLY HIS MOVE TO RETRIEVE THE FIREWOOD FROM UNDER THE FIRE CAME A LITTLE TOO LATE. WHETHER IT CAN CALM THE ANGER OF THE AMERICAN PUBLIC AND REMOVE THE DANGER OF IMPEACHMENT IS STILL DOUBTFUL... FORD'S NOMINATION AS VICE PRESIDENT HAD STOOD A GOOD CHANCE OF BEING CONFIRMED, BUT NOW IT IS HARD TO PREDICT. IF THE IMPEACHMENT PROCEEDINGS GO THROUGH AT THIS TIME, HOUSE SPEAKER ALBERT WILL TAKE OVER AS PRESIDENT. BUT HE IS ONLY A CONGRESSMAN AND WAS NOT ELECTED TO BE THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE; WHETHER HE HAS THE ABILITY TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY OVER THE PRESENT SITUATION IS ALSO QUESTIONABLE. TO BE FAIR, ONE MAY SAY THAT FEW CAN MEASURE UP TO NIXON'S POLITICAL CAPABILITY. ONLY HE IS OVER-CONFIDENT AND HAS PLACED HIS TRUST IN THE WRONG PEOPLE, AND THIS HAS PUT HIM IN HIS PRESENT DILEMMA. THE AGNEW CASE HAS ALREADY DEALT A BLOW TO THE NIXON REGIME, NOW HE HIMSELF IS THREATENED BY IMPEACHMENT. NIXON'S PERSONAL CAREER MATTERS LITTLE. THE QUESTION IS THAT ON HIM RESTS THE SECURITY OF AMERICA AND THE WORLD AT LARGE. IT WILL BE THE GOOD FORTUNE OF NOT JUST THE UNITED STATES IF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE CAN SHOW SOME UNDERSTANDING AND NOT BE TOO HARSH WITH HIM AFTER HE HAS GIVEN UP THE TAPES, THEREBY ALLOWING HIM TO CONCENTRATE ON THE MAJOR PROBLEMS WHICH EXIST WITHIN AND WITHOUT THE U.S. TODAY."

4. SOUTH CHINA MORNING POST: THE SADDEST WORDS IN WASHINGTON TODAY MUST BE "IF ONLY..."

5. IF ONLY MR. NIXON HAD DONE THREE MONTHS AGO WHAT HE DID YESTERDAY , AND HAND OVER THE WATERGATE TAPES FOR INDEPENDENT ASSESSMENT, HOW MUCH DIVISIVE BITTERNESS MIGHT HAVE BEEN AVOIDED?

6. THE ABOUT FACE ON THE TAPES IS THE LATEST IN A LONG SERIES OF RETREATS FOR MR. NIXON EVER SINCE THE WATERGATE SCANDAL BROKE....

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7. IT HAS BEEN A SHABBY PERFORMANCE, BUT IT HAS STRANGELY ILLUMINED THE STRENGTH OF THE AMERICAN SCHEME OF GOVERNMENT.

8. THAT THE SYSTEM OF CHECKS AND BALANCES PUT TOGETHER SO PAINSTAKINGLY IN 1776 SHOULD HAVE OUTLASTED THE UNPRECEDENTED STRESSES OF THE PAST HALF YEAR IN SUCH EXCELLENT CONDITION IS A TRIBUTE TO THE WISDOM AND FORETHOUGHT OF THE FOUNDING FATHERS...

9. MR. NIXON'S PAST DEVIOUSNESS HAS AVAILED HIM NOUGHT; HIS
DECISION TO SURRENDER THE WATERGATE TAPES TO JUDGE SIRICA HAS
BROUGHT HIM FULL CIRCLE...

10. ALONG THE TORTUOUS TRAIL THAT HE HAS PURSUED ARE SOME 40
BROKEN CAREERS AND SHATTERED FRIENDSHIPS - THOSE WHO HAVE RESIGNED,
OR BEEN SACKED, AND THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN AND ARE BEING PROSECUTED...

11. NOW HIS NATIONAL POLITICAL AUTHORITY IS IN TATTERS, HIS CREDIBIL-
ITY
SHATTERED, HIS PUBLIC POPULARITY AT AN ALL-TIME LOW. HIS LEADERSHIP
IS QUESTIONED AND EVEN REJECTED BY AN ANGRY CONGRESS.

12. BUT AT LONG LAST, AFTER LEADING THE COUNTRY DANGEROUSLY CLOSE
TO DISASTER, MR. NIXON HAS CHOSEN THE RIGHT COURSE. END QUOTE
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